



# Brownfields Assessment Pilots

## *City of Laurens, SC*

### BACKGROUND

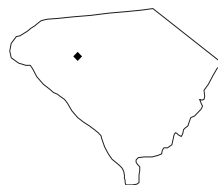
EPA has selected the City of Laurens for a Brownfields Assessment Pilot. Laurens (population 9,916) is a rural community near Greenville in northwestern South Carolina. Plant closings, including the shutdown of the Laurens Glass Plant, have tripled the city's unemployment rate in the past year. With the loss of large industry and mid-size farm operations, Laurens has been unable to maintain a stable economy. As a result, the majority of Laurens' workforce now commutes to work in neighboring counties, which are seeing their populations grow while Laurens' population remains flat. Laurens' poverty level is 19.8 percent, 5 percent higher than the state average, and its 10.8 percent unemployment rate is more than double that of the state. The median household income is \$22,338, compared to \$33,325 for the state. The city's minority population is nearly 44 percent, compared to 30 percent for the state.

Laurens will focus on its downtown area for this Pilot. This target area includes about 12 potential brownfields properties covering more than 15 acres of abandoned land. The Laurens Glass Plant, two mills, and a salvage yard are among these downtown sites. They once represented a significant tax base, but the abandonment and deterioration of these and other old commercial and industrial facilities in the downtown area have deterred investment in the area and contributed to blight. Developers wary of purchasing these brownfields have instead constructed new facilities on greenspace parcels outside the incorporated areas of the county.

### OBJECTIVES

The city's objective is to revitalize the downtown area of Laurens, which has been negatively impacted by the closing of several industrial sites in recent years. To accomplish this objective, the Pilot will identify and address perceived and real environmental issues associated with abandoned or underutilized properties in and around

### PILOT SNAPSHOT



*City of Laurens,  
South Carolina*

**Date of Announcement:**  
May 2002

**Amount:** \$ 200,000

**Profile:** The Pilot targets brownfields sites in downtown Laurens in order to revitalize the area into a viable business, visitor, and shopping center and help return economic stability to the city.

### Contacts:

City of Laurens  
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Regional Brownfields Team  
U.S. EPA Region 4  
(404) 562-8661

Visit the EPA Region 4 Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/region4/waste/bf/index.htm>

For further information, including specific Pilot contacts, additional Pilot information, brownfields news and events, and publications and links, visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:  
[www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields)

Laurens's downtown area. Pilot funds will be used to inventory and prioritize potential brownfields; involve the community in the inventory and decision making processes; conduct up to five Phase I and three Phase II environmental assessments; and complete risk assessments, cleanup, and redevelopment plans for two properties.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Activities planned as part of this Pilot include:

- Inventorying and prioritizing potential brownfields sites;
- Reaching out to the community to inform them about the project and encourage their involvement in the inventory and decision making processes;
- Conducting Phase I assessments at up to five priority sites;
- Conducting Phase II assessments at up to three of these priority sites; and
- Completing risk assessments and developing integrated cleanup and redevelopment plans for two of these priority sites.

*The cooperative agreement for this Pilot has not yet been negotiated; therefore, activities described in this fact sheet are subject to change.*